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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN VIEWS IN ADVANCE OF THE GAERC

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Polchief discussed the November 16-17 GAERC on November 12 with Klaus Famira, MFA European Correspondent. Famira offered the following views:

-- Russia: GAERC participants will discuss EU-Russia cooperation on climate change, energy, Iran, Afghanistan, and non-proliferation, among other issues, as well as the situation in Georgia. The GOA favors the establishment of a new Russia-EU cooperation agreement, and also supports speedy WTO accession for Russia.

-- Ukraine: The EU will discuss the impact of the economic crisis on Ukraine as well as Ukrainian reform efforts in the areas of rule of law, justice, and human rights.

-- Somalia: Participants plan to adopt a Crisis Management Concept for Somalia, which will allow the EU to implement an ESDP mission to train 2,000 Somali security forces for one year.

-- Belarus: The EU will decide whether to extend, and suspend, travel restrictions on Belarus. As Belarus has made little progress on reforms, the most likely outcome is an agreement on a 12-month extension and continued suspension (as previously reported ref tel B).

-- Development Assistance: Development Ministers will discuss how the EU can raise official development assistance to 0.56 percent of GDP.

-- Middle East Peace: The EU has added the Middle East peace process as a discussion item, in light of concerns over the failure to re-start Israeli-Palestinian talks or to create a Palestinian unity government, and the decision by President Abbas not to seek re-election.

EACHO